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241249Z Mar 05

UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000299

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV FAID SOCI DU
SUBJECT: OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF GOUBETTO HEALTH CLINIC

11. (U) An official ceremony was held March 16 in the rural community of Goubetto, located 25 miles south of the capital, to open a newly rehabilitated health facility. The Goubetto Clinic previously was defunct until the USAID program for health sector reform began rehabilitation of it in December 2004. The ceremony formally announced to the public that USAID's effort to assist the Djiboutian Ministry of Health in reforming the health sector had completed the first of many rural health facility rehabilitations in their program.

12. (U) Although Goubetto is "officially" a referral clinic, screening and advising patients who may require more help and sending them to the district hospital in Ali Sabieh, it is capable of attending to normal, uncomplicated deliveries; treating common ailments that the nurse can identify such as normal cases of malaria; and providing community services such as routine vaccination of children under five and ante-natal services for pregnant women.

13. (U) Two other clinics, located in the north of the country, are in the final stages of rehabilitation, and should be ready for opening in mid-April. There are, in total, 21 remaining health clinics to be rehabilitated over the next two years under the USAID program.

14. (U) Dr. Mohamed Ali Kamil, Minister of Health, opened the ceremony with USAID Representative Schulman in attendance. The Minister cited the achievement of the community and thanked those who to complete rehabilitation. He asked the community to take advantage of this clinic since those who work here will receive refresher training to improve their skills. USAID Representative thanked the Minister for his support of the health sector reform program USAID was implementing and said the clinic was the first of many fruits borne of this collaboration. She challenged the community to embrace the clinic as their own, to take care of it and use it by bringing their children to be vaccinated and mothers to deliver their babies.

15. (U) During a tour of the facility afterwards, the nurse in charge, Ismail Ahmed, explained that until rehabilitation began, the health clinic was comprised of only two small rooms. The renovation not only added on an entirely new section, the maternity ward, but also included an adjoining wing where the head nurse and his family would live. This would make him available, virtually 24 hours a day. The renovation added running water, fed by a reservoir located in the enclosed backyard of the clinic, a sanitation system, as well as solar powered electric lighting. New beds and a maternity table, as well as examination equipment and storage containers for vaccines and medicines completed the rehabilitation. In addition, a radio communication system would be installed which would permit the announcement of emergency transfers to the district hospital.

16. (U) Comment: Although it was very heartening to see the positive reaction of the community to the new health clinic, its rehabilitation was a reminder of the lack of investment in Djibouti's health sector. All rural health clinics, like the one in Goubetto, are in a state of disrepair and disuse. It is clear that the Ministry of Health will need to commit to rural health clinics, since their staff requires not only medical supplies and refresher training, but salaries to motivate them to work, too. One of the challenges of the USAID funded health sector reform project will be to assist communities to be able to better address their ability to support these clinics not just by using them, but also to look for creative ways to financially support them. This creation of demand may help the Ministry of Health better address the issues of maintaining supplies and staff competency. End comment.

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